DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 445 782 PS 028 815

AUTHOR Paley, Vivian Gussin
TITLE The Kindness of Children.
ISBN ISBN-0-674-00390-X
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 129p.
AVAILABLE FROM Harvard University Press, 79 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138-1423; Tel: 617-496-1340; Fax: 617-349-5244; web site: http://www.hup.harvard.edu ($12.95).
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Altruism; *Children; Dramatic Play; *Peer Relationship; Personal Narratives; Pretend Play; *Prosocial Behavior; Story Telling; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Retelling; Spiritual Development; Story Themes

ABSTRACT

This narrative details the responses of children and adults to a story about young children welcoming a boy with severe disabilities into their own story telling and re-enactment. Linking the act of story telling to the practice of the Hasidim, who would teach people to think about goodness by telling stories about holy men performing good works, the narrative explores how telling others about the young children's kindness to another child elicited further stories conveying children's need to do something nice for someone, to recognize someone as another person, and to make a connection to another person. The stories told by high school students illustrated how stories about positive events made people happy, elicited good deeds from them, and helped them gain a new perspective on their own struggles to overcome loneliness. Adults' stories were more negative in tone than children's or adolescents' stories and conveyed memories of injustices and stories of rejection and teasing. The narrative suggests that when children give each other roles in pretend play to re-enact their stories, they are experiencing how other people feel, which is the basis of moral development. Some of the children's stories illustrate children's use of a disguise to slowly gain acceptance by others and a place in the classroom. Other stories illustrate the isolation inherent in the schoolhouse as conveyed in themes of displacement and loneliness. The narrative concludes with a discussion by fifth graders of the rule "You can't say you can't play," the difficulty in changing habits of being unkind to others, and the children's realization that they used to be much kinder. (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.